

Delaware Fruit and Vegetable Growers Who Pass Food Safety Audits Eligible for Cost-Share

DOVER, Del. (March 12, 2021) – Delaware fruit and vegetable growers who receive a passing score on their third-party food safety audits and agricultural water tests are eligible to receive cost-share to help cover the expense through the Delaware Department of Agriculture.

Many wholesale produce buyers require farms to pass third-party food safety audits to purchase the food to sell in retail establishments such as grocery stores. Audits verify that fruits and vegetables are produced, packed, handled, and stored safely to minimize microbial food safety hazards. Testing agricultural water ensures the water used in crop production and post-harvest activities is safe.

The cost-share program will pay 80 percent of the costs of a successful USDA-AMS or commercial third-party audit with a maximum reimbursement of \$1,000 per year for each farm. Also, producers can be compensated for 80 percent of the cost associated with annual water testing, with a maximum reimbursement of \$500 per year for each farm. If USDA has covered 100 percent of an applicant's successful audit, the applicant is still eligible to be reimbursed for water testing under the cost-share program.

To be eligible for assistance, Delaware fruit and vegetable growers must meet the following requirements:

- Growers must have completed and passed a third-party USDA-AMS or other commercial audits before July 31.
- Growers must submit receipts for the water tests performed.

- All paperwork must be submitted to DDA no later than July 31, 2021, to be eligible for reimbursement.

Any growers who have not submitted receipts and paperwork from their food safety audit or water test that was successfully completed between November 15, 2018, and December 31, 2020, may still apply for the cost-share program for reimbursement with DDA by submitting all required documents no later than June 1, 2021.

To schedule a USDA-AMS food safety audit, email Brenda Clements, Food Products Inspection Field Supervisor at Brenda.Clements@delaware.gov.

Funding is provided on a first-come, first-serve basis. Delaware growers must fully complete the necessary application and forms and show verification of successful audit completion, billing, and proof of payment for the audit. For questions regarding the Food Safety Audit Cost-Share Program, contact Anna Wicks at 302-698-4583 or via email at Anna.Wicks@delaware.gov.

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